

SERVICE DATE
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Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
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PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

Universal Service Fund Grant Program for Telecommunications Access
Programs or Projects by Non-Profit Groups

5-NF-2017

ORDER

This is the Order approving the award of Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Universal Service Fund (USF) grants for Access Programs or Projects by Non-Profit Groups pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 160.125(2). This is a grant program with a maximum total of \$500,000 per fiscal year available to be disbursed to qualified applicants.

Background

The purpose of the Non-Profit Program is to facilitate affordable access to telecommunications through programs or projects not available through other USF programs. The programs or projects must also be consistent with the purposes identified in Wis. Stat. § 196.218(5)(a)1. Reimbursable costs include: the costs of telecommunications services and telecommunications equipment used by the program or project; the cost of training for those who are served by the program or project so that they can utilize the services; the administrative costs directly attributable to the program or project; and the cost of technical expertise required to complete the program or project.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) has approved grants under this program in nine out of the last ten fiscal years. The grant program was not funded in FY 2009 due to state budget constraints. In FY 2016, the Commission approved sixteen projects for a total of \$500,000.00.

The request for grant applications for FY 2017 was mailed and made available to the public on the Commission's web site in February 2017. Applications were due on March 17, 2017.

The Commission received 23 applications for FY 2017 and all were received by the deadline for submission. The requests totaled \$1,283,597.60. This total included an alternative proposal for combining the funding for the eight Independent Living Centers (ILCs)—a request for \$350,000 submitted by the Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers. The eight ILCs also submitted separate grant proposals. The applications were independently reviewed and rated by a panel consisting of two Commission staff members and one outside party. After the applications were rated, the panel met to share observations and comments about the proposals and made recommendations for the Commission's consideration.

Excluding the alternative combined ILC funding proposal of \$350,000, the total for the requests was \$933,597.60. This amount was more than 87 percent above the full available funds budgeted for the Non-Profit Grants in FY 2017 (\$500,000).

This year's requests set a new high in the total dollar amount requested and continues the high number of participants established in 2016. This sustained rate of higher participation is due in part to the Federal Communications Commission's decision to include broadband in the federal definition of essential service for the Lifeline program. This change in definition at the federal level also affected the definition used for purposes of the Wisconsin USF programs. As a result of the recent amendment of the state USF rules and changes in federal rules, the Non-Profit Grants, after a five-year hiatus, may now again include funding for computer labs, broadband connections, or other Internet-related projects.

The Commission discussed this matter at its open meetings of May 11 and May 25, 2017.

Opinion

The Commission determines that it will move the funding of the eight ILCs off of the Non-Profit Grants budget and supports funding them jointly as part of the USF budget for support of the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) beginning in FY 2018. This reduces the remaining grants to be considered by \$721,177.00 to a total of \$562,420.60. The Commission directs Commission staff to continue to work with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Bureau of Aging and Disability Resource Centers (DHS-BADR), which runs the state's Assistive Technology (AT) programs with services delivered by the ILCs, on a cooperative venture for delivery of the TEPP-support services, and delegates approval of a Memorandum of Agreement with DHS-BADR to the Administrator of the Division of Business and Program Management.

The Commission finds that two projects are ineligible for an award of funds based upon the applications submitted. The two projects not being funded totaled \$77,302.60 and the reasons for not funding them are summarized in the following table:

Organization	Request	Reason for Adjustment
Kenosha Community Health Center	\$ 55,722.60	Inadequate matching funds and is targeted to telemedicine objectives.
Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative	\$ 21,580.00	Closed system serving populations not the target of this grant program.

The remaining 12 applications requested a total of \$485,118.00 of funding, which fell below the \$500,000 budgeted for these grants. The rating panel recommended to the Commission that all 12 applications be approved by the Commission and fully funded. After evaluating all of the applications, the Commission reduces funding for two of the proposals. The

funding levels for the two grant requests being partially funded and the reasons for the adjustments are summarized in the following table:

Organization	Request	Approved	Reason for Adjustment
Americans for Better Hearing Foundation	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 65,000.00	Subtract \$10,000 from the amount funded for the e-mail campaign due to lack of support for the cost.
DANEnet	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	Need proof of concept and evidence of how computers are used before expanding the size of this project.

The Commission directs the two organizations with partially funded grant requests to provide updated budget information to the Commission.

The 12 grants awarded are identified on Attachment 1 to this Order by applicant name and amount awarded. The Commission determines that these grant awards, which total \$455,118.00 for FY 2017, will contribute funding to multiple types of projects that will effectively meet public needs and serve diverse populations throughout the state.

For future Non-Profit grant requests, the Commission directs Commission staff to require applicants who have been previously awarded a grant under this program to provide additional information in their next applications as to metrics and details on the success of their programs.

Order

1. The grant requests of Access to Independence, Inc., Center for Independent Living for Western Wisconsin, IndependenceFirst, Independent Living Resources, Inc., Midstate Independent Living Consultants, Inc., North Country Independent Living, Options for Independent Living, Society's Assets, Inc., and the Wisconsin Coalition of ILCs are denied with the intent of funding the projects and operations in these proposals as ongoing statewide support for the TEPP starting in the FY 2018 USF budget.

2. The grant requests of Kenosha Community Health Center and Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative are denied.

3. The grant requests of the applicants identified on Attachment 1 are approved for the award amounts identified in Attachment 1.

4. The Americans for Better Hearing Foundation and DANEnet shall provide updated budget information to the Commission as a result of the partially funded grant requests.

5. Applicants shall only use grant funds for specifically approved projects and shall comply with all conditions identified in the grant award notification letter.

6. Jurisdiction is retained.

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin, this 6th day of June, 2017.

By the Commission:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra J. Paske", with a stylized, flowing script.

Sandra J. Paske
Secretary to the Commission

SJP:dlh:DL:01541278

See attached Notice of Rights

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN
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**NOTICE OF RIGHTS FOR REHEARING OR JUDICIAL REVIEW, THE
TIMES ALLOWED FOR EACH, AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE
PARTY TO BE NAMED AS RESPONDENT**

The following notice is served on you as part of the Commission's written decision. This general notice is for the purpose of ensuring compliance with Wis. Stat. § 227.48(2), and does not constitute a conclusion or admission that any particular party or person is necessarily aggrieved or that any particular decision or order is final or judicially reviewable.

PETITION FOR REHEARING

If this decision is an order following a contested case proceeding as defined in Wis. Stat. § 227.01(3), a person aggrieved by the decision has a right to petition the Commission for rehearing within 20 days of the date of service of this decision, as provided in Wis. Stat. § 227.49. The date of service is shown on the first page. If there is no date on the first page, the date of service is shown immediately above the signature line. The petition for rehearing must be filed with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin and served on the parties. An appeal of this decision may also be taken directly to circuit court through the filing of a petition for judicial review. It is not necessary to first petition for rehearing.

PETITION FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW

A person aggrieved by this decision has a right to petition for judicial review as provided in Wis. Stat. § 227.53. In a contested case, the petition must be filed in circuit court and served upon the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin within 30 days of the date of service of this decision if there has been no petition for rehearing. If a timely petition for rehearing has been filed, the petition for judicial review must be filed within 30 days of the date of service of the order finally disposing of the petition for rehearing, or within 30 days after the final disposition of the petition for rehearing by operation of law pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 227.49(5), whichever is sooner. If an *untimely* petition for rehearing is filed, the 30-day period to petition for judicial review commences the date the Commission serves its original decision.¹ The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin must be named as respondent in the petition for judicial review.

If this decision is an order denying rehearing, a person aggrieved who wishes to appeal must seek judicial review rather than rehearing. A second petition for rehearing is not permitted.

Revised: March 27, 2013

¹ See *Currier v. Wisconsin Dep't of Revenue*, 2006 WI App 12, 288 Wis. 2d 693, 709 N.W.2d 520.

ATTACHMENT 1

NONPROFIT ACCESS PROGRAMS OR PROJECTS AWARDS

FOR FY 2017

Organization	City	Amount Requested	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
ABC for Health, Inc.	Madison [Statewide]	\$28,100.00	\$28,100.00	Provide outreach and educational webcasts and live trainings to at least 500 partners/650 families about reduced cost telecommunication services and equipment for low-income families and those with children with disabilities.
Americans for Better Hearing Foundation	Burr Ridge, IL [Statewide]	\$75,000.00	\$65,000.00	Use of advanced electronic media campaigns to educate residents and medical professionals about TEPP and to use a multi-layered electronic media program to engage medical professionals in referring to TEPP.
Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc.	Madison	\$36,000.00	\$36,000.00	CAC Telecommunications Assistance Program will provide 170 low-income households with financial assistance, budget counseling and mediation with telecommunications service providers in order for them to obtain and maintain telephone, Internet and/or cell phone services.
DANEnet	Madison	\$40,000.00	\$20,000.00	DANEnet will help low-income households get affordable Internet access, provide low-cost computers to low-income households, and provide digital literacy workshop and drop-in tech support to make the devices and connectivity useful.
HEAR Wisconsin	West Allis	\$10,675.00	\$10,675.00	Provide outreach, co-payment assistance and in-home visits to ensure equal access to the TEPP program and provide training and follow-up support to clients who require captioned telephone service.

Organization	City	Amount Requested	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
Independent Living, Inc.	Madison	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	Install wiring to make a variety of telecommunications options available to residents of a new 135-unit affordable housing development. Includes: Cat6 and coax cabling, wireless routers and connectivity technology.
New Concept Self Development Center	Milwaukee	\$22,200.00	\$22,200.00	Provide continuous access to telecommunications and computer Internet services during evenings and weekends at New Concept's Employment Resource Center and McKinley Gardens Apartments Community Center.
Northwest Wisconsin CEP	Ashland	\$44,588.00	\$44,588.00	Assist low-income customers in obtaining and maintaining affordable access to a basic set of telecommunications services in ten counties in Northwestern Wisconsin. Provide education on, and work with, the Lifeline program.
Vision Forward Association, Inc.	Milwaukee	\$29,100.00	\$29,100.00	Provide access to and training on state of the art cell phones and smart phones to individuals who are blind or visually impaired to help them navigate in life and maintain their independence.
Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council	Independence	\$32,225.00	\$32,225.00	Equip low-income, entrepreneurial individuals in rural areas of six counties with laptops, mobile hotspots, and education so that they can access the Internet, engage with the global market and achieve self-employment.
WiscNet	Green Bay	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	WiscNet and Green Bay Area Schools will investigate technologies to provide students in low-income, under-served families in Green Bay area affordable access to Internet-based school content from home.

Organization	City	Amount Requested	Amount Awarded	Project Summary
YWCA Southeast Wisconsin	Milwaukee	\$42,230.00	\$42,230.00	YWCA will provide telecommunications access and related resource assistance for a minimum of 750 unduplicated low-income individuals in Milwaukee and Racine Counties from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018.
Total		\$485,118	\$455,118	